



PLAY POLICY

This Policy was approved at a meeting of the Full Governing Body on Monday 24th November 2025

Chair of Governors: Mr J Howes
Headteacher: Ms Y Nunn

Signed *J Howes* Chair of Governors
Signed *Yvonne Nunn* Headteacher

Review Date: Autumn 2026

At Hampton Primary School, we believe that play is a vital part of our children's day where our nurturing and caring environment, which enables our children to relate to the world around them, helps them to feel valued, included and secure, and supports their physical, social, emotional and cultural development.

Play at Hampton provides our children with the opportunity to develop life-long skills such as resilience, independence and risk management. Play is a vital way for children to relate to the world around them and it enables them to exercise their natural curiosity.

Play is child-initiated, so it allows children to independently make choices, solve problems, overcome challenges and learn through trial and error. Trusting children to play independently and responsibly develops their confidence, self-identity, resilience and sense of agency - all of which are vital learning and life skills which can be transferred back into the classroom. For this reason, we invest a lot of time and energy in ensuring our pupils at Hampton have enriching and well-resourced play experiences.

Through play, children learn the power of communication - how to negotiate, take turns and how to compromise. Play also offers opportunities to develop children's imagination and boosts creativity - children re-imagine the world and objects around them in a multitude of ways and they use role-play to explore and enjoy different identities as well as developing their own.

The Purpose of this Policy

This policy is intended to be a practical working document. Many aspects of this policy have already been discussed and agreed by teachers at staff meetings and have been consulted with parents and children.

It outlines a basic level of good practice and provision which is to be matched in all of our play areas. We deem outdoor play and learning as an important part of Hampton Primary School and recognise the benefits championing this play can bring to our children. This policy will develop over time.

This policy ensures all staff and parents know what OPAL play offers and how Hampton Primary School will implement it in their own way.

All staff will be expected to follow the practices within this policy. This policy will ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities when implementing play practices and know that offering these play skills is an integral part of their role in developing children's play skills, independence and resilience. It seeks to inform anyone working with children on practical strategies regarding risk benefit, supervision and managing play situations.

Benefits of Play

An essential element of exploration within play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities.

We believe that

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and different ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.
- Our Play is inclusive for all pupils as each pupil can push their own boundaries from their own starting point.

Managing Risk

Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to judge risks independently and to learn new skills. All children need and want to take risks to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capabilities. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs and ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving the risk of injury.

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. In the words of the play sector publication 'Best Play', play provision should aim to 'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm'.

'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (2012)

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document 'Children's Play and Leisure - Promoting a Balanced Approach' (September 2012) as the principle value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in 'Managing Risk in Play Provision': An Implementation Guide. In addition to standard risk/benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them. This will be done through OPAL assemblies and in the moment while the children are playing.

Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable/unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play.

To manage risks:

- Our caretaker performs regular Health & Safety checks of the play areas.
- The Opal working party and all playtime supervision staff will check for dangers/ risks when outside with the children.
- The children will be made aware of possible risks and helped to manage those via staff alerting them, for example slippery or wet surfaces.
- Separate the play area into zones to maintain a risk/benefit management system creating quiet areas as well as areas for physical play.

Clothing

We would advise as staff that all children come prepared for outdoor/ all weathers play. During the colder and wet weather wellies or walking boots should be worn by staff and children when walking on the school field or in the woods. Children should also wear coats during cold weather. Children need to be responsible for managing their outdoor clothing. This includes being prepared before they go outside to play. In the summer children will need sun cream and hats to protect themselves. Part of outdoor play means children may get muddy. We will endeavour to reduce this as much as possible but free play means allowing children to explore the areas they like. Waterproof overclothes and wellington boots are designed to give children a sense of belonging but also a way to protect the children's 'good' clothes they wear at home.

The Adults' Role in Play

Hampton Primary School aims to maximise the benefits children gain from play by training all staff who supervise playtime in Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive to facilitate an environment which nurtures children's self-directed play. The playworker's core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited. 5 Playground rules will be kept to the minimum required to maintain safety and all playground rules will be agreed by the Play working party

First Aid

All break and lunchtime staff carry a waist bag, which contains basic First Aid equipment. There is also additional First aid equipment stored in the Quiet area. All staff on duty are first aid trained.

Any head bumps must be reported to parents via a bump note; this will be completed by the member of staff dealing with the child. If an incident involving a child requires a phone call home this must be discussed with the SLT. All First Aid incidents should be recorded in the accident books kept within the first aid area.

Equality and Access

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

This policy will be closely monitored by the SLT and the OPAL working party and reviewed based on the needs of the adults and children in the school.

The policy will be reviewed in line with the SEND code of practice to ensure all children are able to access the play provision (this may mean with support for some children).

All parts of play provision can be accessible. Please see our Accessibility Policy which can be found on the school website.

